



Master
Gardener™

An educational program of the LSU AgCenter

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"I was just sittin' here enjoyin' the company. Plants got a lot to say if you take the time to listen."

Eeyore from *Winnie the Pooh*

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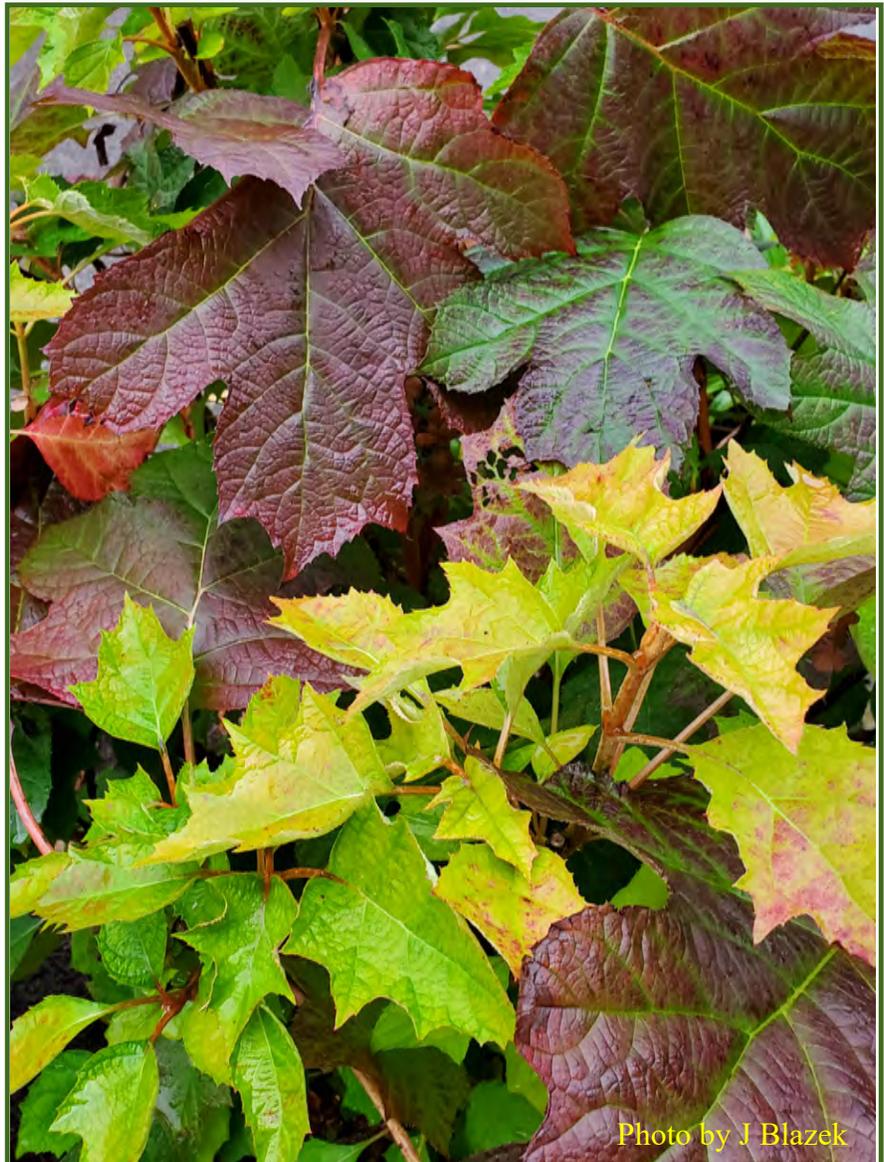


Photo by J Blazek

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Why Not Roses?

Rose gardening seems to get a bad rap these days. Planning, bed preparation, fertilizing, spraying, and pruning ... it all sounds like a lot of effort. But those are the same practices we employ in our vegetable gardens, landscape beds, and even some perennial beds. Nobody ever said that gardening did not require a little work.



The promise of two abundant bloom seasons, lovely aromas, attracting pollinators, and prior rose gardening experience was enough to put me over the edge. Literally over the edge! A newly built south-facing extension of our back porch and patio was calling for a raised bed. Why not roses? Stacked stones from the earlier construction project were available and free. Oak trees to the southwest would filter late afternoon rays. In early spring 2020, the weatherman predicted several cool, dry days ahead. So the rose adventure began.

The perfect spot ... roses perform best with six to eight hours of direct sunlight, good air circulation, and well-drained, fertile soil. Morning sun works best by allowing the foliage to dry out, thus reducing disease issues. Extended hours of sun, especially in the afternoon, can stress the bushes. Blossom color and quality may suffer in more than eight hours of direct sun,. Protection via filtered light or afternoon shade may be necessary.

After clearing the selected area of grass, then tilling several inches of clay, a design for the raised bed was finalized. Base stones were placed to hold back the first loads of soil mix. My husband hauled tractor-loads of bark-based garden mix combined with river sand, compost, and decaying leaves. We watered to help set the ground and then added fertilizer. Layer-by-layer, we built up the stones. We added more soil mix and leaf compost, and aimed for a pH between 6.0 and 7.0. Over the fall and early winter of 2020, the bed lay ready and waiting. We topped it off with several inches of pine straw to prevent the soil from eroding.



Why Not Roses? continued

By early February 2021, anticipation got the better of me. After prepping the new bed with a massive bag of my secret weapon, bonemeal, the planting began. I started with a few favorites brought over from our previous rose garden. Then added several deliveries of bare-root David Austin English roses, hybrid teas, floribundas, and All-American Rose Selections (AARS). Bare-rooted plants were soaked in buckets of water. They promised a rich array of colors ranging from copper to golden yellow, baby pink to deep red, even palest ivory to apricot. Positioned and re-positioned by height, by color, and finally by sun-tolerance, the bushes crowned the much-awaited rose bed. Blooms were only weeks away... so I thought!



Two days after that planting, the prediction of a hard freeze gave us just enough time to gather unoccupied flowerpots and a few of bales of pine straw. Some old blankets and landscape cloth atop inverted pots protected the straw-wrapped newbies from a long winter's nap. Rain pelted and turned to ice. The wind blew relentlessly. The hard freeze lingered..... and lingered. Expecting a mass of mushy, frozen roots, it was a pleasant surprise to find only one bush initially bid us adieu. Its demise was the result of



gardener error ... failing to remove the pot and straw after the sun emerged and temperatures rose. A second bush surrendered by late spring but, overall, the outcome was a good one. I watered and watched. The rose bushes grew.

I knew that water splashing on the rose bush foliage invites fungal leaf disease, especially if it stays on the leaves too long. Soaker hoses can lessen the damage potential and serve as a reliable source of irrigation. Installing soaker hoses throughout the garden enabled me to better control the four to six inches of water penetration my bushes required. Raised beds tend to dry out more quickly than ground level beds. Use of soaker hoses and extended periods of irrigation work better for rose bushes than short, frequent watering with a hose or sprinkler. During the growing season, roses prefer slightly moist soil.



Why Not Roses? continued



With regular fertilization, roses will offer an impressive show. Slow-release fertilizer can supply a steady balance of nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, and minor nutrients. Many fertilizers also add some pest and disease protection. Although in our climate, pests and diseases often require a more direct effort. Organic methods such as, application of compost, decaying leaves, composted manure, and fish emulsion provide nutrients and beneficial soil microbes.

Newly planted bare-root roses will tolerate organic supplements at planting time. Waiting until after the first bloom cycle to add full-strength fertilizer will prevent fertilizer root burn.

Black spot (*Diplocarpon rosae*), a fungal disease, has presented challenges. The resulting leaf loss reduces the plant's ability to photosynthesize. Using a routine preventive spray schedule to intervene before the disease is prominent has helped, as has increasing the depth of mulch. Regular preventative fungicide spraying throughout the growing season works best, just as it does in vegetable gardens. Other diseases can be addressed as they occur but avoid letting them linger. Pruning rose bushes far below any sign of disease and careful cleaning of tools using a 10% bleach bath will help prevent the spreading of disease.



And buyer beware! Those rolling carts of rose specials at the big box stores may yield a significant monetary saving initially. The five container roses purchased last spring from a local big box store were not such a savings. One died as soon as the weather warmed. Two required removing before disease issues spread. A fourth turned out to be a massive, heavily thorned climber masquerading as a hybrid tea. Of my five "bargain" roses, only one, First Prize, still graces my garden.

Why Not Roses? continued



When confronted with insect pests such as aphids, thrips, spider mites, and cucumber beetles, I try to start with insecticidal soap. But I must resort to spraying insecticides on a regular basis, especially during the warmer months. It is disappointing to see the damage insects perform on the blossoms. If left uncontrolled, things can get even worse. However, Leaf Cutter Bee damage, seen as round holes near the leaf edges ... that is only cosmetic. One might say it is for a good cause: the bees use the leaf pieces to partition their eggs inside their burrows.

Once roses have survived their first growing season, some pruning will likely be needed. In south Louisiana, minor pruning can be done in late-August (unless a hurricane pays us a visit, then it is repair pruning). For major pruning, late January is the best time. Pruning requires a pair of sharp bypass pruners, never anvil-style clippers that crush the stems. Rose gloves can protect arms when removing dead or damaged canes. For major pruning, cut back one-third to one-half of the prior year's growth. Cuts should reveal white, healthy centers inside the canes. It is best to cut back just above an outward-facing bud. As a result, new growth will face outward, increasing air circulation within the bush. Be sure to remove all damaged or diseased canes.



Julia Child Floribunda



South Africa grandflora with Touch of Class and Big Blue Salvia

Why Not Roses? continued

The rose garden that was not going to be a lot of work has proven a source of enjoyment, as well as a perpetual learning experience over the past two years. Adding salvia in year two provided contrasting color and increased the pollinator population. Early mornings now sound a little like a freeway with the bees flitting from one Big Blue Salvia to the next. A few roses have been repositioned due to growth patterns. And I have learned that roses do not have thorns ... they have prickles.



Hurricane Ida reminded me how resilient some roses are as Gypsy Soul's bright red blooms peaked out among the twisted rose branches and salvia! Those oak trees to the southwest of the garden were not nearly as fortunate. At least they did not fall on the roses! Nobody ever said that gardening did not require a little work.

But the rewards are so worth the effort!



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All photos by Gayle Miller.

Gayle Miller
Master Gardener

A Virtual Tour With Jim Bates: Collecting Rent From His Honey Bees

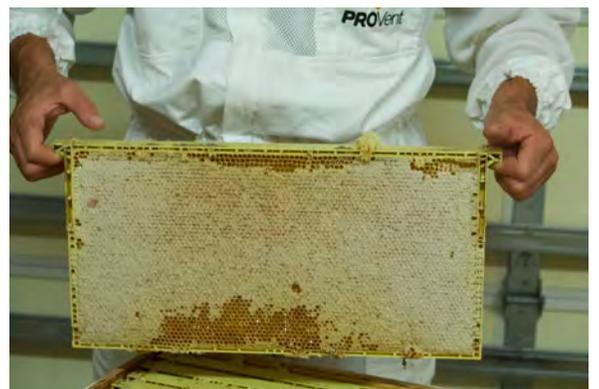


Jim (holding the smoker), his son, Jim, and grandson, Austin, suited up to collect honey shortly after Hurricane Ida.

Opening the top of the hive.



Removing a frame with a full honeycomb.



A Virtual Tour With Jim Bates: Collecting Rent From His Honey Bees, continued



Dee Dee Bates and neighbor, Hadi, supervising Jim's efforts to scrape (de-cap) the honeycomb.

After being centrifuged (spun out of the comb), raw honey drips into a strainer and five gallon stainless steel bucket.



Jim has created a short video. Click here to see the full process from beginning to end:

<https://vimeo.com/633831276/cfb974b51d>

All photos by Jim and Dee Dee Bates.

Jim Bates
Master Gardener
Vegucator
Beekeeper

Along Came A Spider Who Sat Down Beside Her

There are many, like Little Miss Muffet, who run in the opposite direction when they see a spider. Not me! I admit it. I am an unapologetic, unabashed arachnophile. As a young child growing up “down in da parish,” I was fascinated by those mysterious eight-legged creatures who could create magical silver webs. Now, each summer, I welcome my orb weavers who come annually to guard the entrances to my home and gardens. I consider them part of my native, organic, holistic decorations each autumn. Here are some of my pet favorites who adorn my yard and gardens with their golden and silver threads.



Golden Silk Orb Weaver

Trichonephila clavipes, previously called *Nephila clavipes*, is also known as the golden silk orb weaver or the banana spider. The adult female measures up to two inches in body length and is known for creating elaborate webs that can spread out three feet or more. The adult males are somewhat smaller. They tend to stay at the edges of the web and pluck the web strands to get the attention of the female. While some species of spiders stay in their webs only for a short time (some will even build a new web each day), the golden orb weaver will stay in the same web for several weeks. This lady in her web was dubbed my guard spider because she greeted me each morning for over a month right outside my back door . She and her ancestors have been standing guard each September for several years.

Spiny backed orb weaver

Although she looks like a tiny crab, the spiny backed orb weaver is unrelated to that crustacean. Neither is she related to the family of spiders called crab spiders. The spiny backed orb weaver, *Gasteracantha cancriformis*, has six pointy spines on the edge of her carapace (upper shell). This spider’s carapace, legs, and venter (underside) are black with white, orange, yellow, or red markings. The female is about 3/8 of an inch across. The male is smaller, 1/8 to 1/16 of an inch. This arachnid can usually be found all year round but is most conspicuous in her large flat web in late summer and through the fall.



Along Came A Spider Who Sat Down Beside Her, continued

The spiny backed orb weaver's web is generally about a 12-inch radius but frequently contains several (up to 30) adjacently attached radial webs to strengthen the primary structure. Conspicuous thicker strands of spider silk are found in this web on the foundation line. The purpose of these thicker strands is unknown. Some speculate that these are visible to birds who then avoid flying through the web. The spiny backed orb weaver loves to eat those annoying insects who swarm around your porch light at night. That may be why she likes to build her web near my front door every year!



Long-bodied cellar spider

The long-bodied cellar spider, *Pholcus phalangiodes*, sometimes called “daddy longlegs,” is not as colorful as her neighbors, ranging from pale yellow to light brown or even gray. The adult female’s body is about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{5}{16}$ of an inch with legs about $1\frac{3}{4}$ to 2 inches long. The males are smaller. They are attracted to outdoor white lights. The long-bodied female spider makes an irregular mess of web threads. Sometimes these spiders will rapidly vibrate in their webs when threatened. This makes them blurry and difficult to see. They are not venomous and not known to bite humans.

Zigzag spider

The *Argiope aurantia* is commonly called yellow garden spider, black and yellow garden spider, golden garden spider, yellow garden orb weaver, writing spider, zigzag spider, zipper spider, or corn spider. The female is a large showy spider whose yellow and black body is about one inch long with long yellow and black striped legs. Her web is large and contains a conspicuous white zigzag structure in the middle the purpose of which is unknown. At night, the female will consume the sticky strands of web and create new ones. She may gain some nutrition from doing this by also consuming minute insects and miscellaneous organic matter stuck to the web strands. Her web is usually woven in open areas as opposed to dense shrubs. The bite of this spider is non-venomous, rare, and usually only occurs if mishandled.



Along Came A Spider Who Sat Down Beside Her, continued

Now that you have met my eight-legged friends who stand guard over my house and gardens, here are a few general spider facts to increase your appreciation of these beautiful creatures.

Spiders are not insects. They are under the Arachnida classification having two body parts, eight legs, and eight eyes.

According to the SpiderID website, there are 32 reported species of spiders in Louisiana.

Only two of the spider species found in Louisiana have venom that is considered poisonous to humans: the brown recluse and the black widow (mug shots of these bad boys at the bottom of this page).

The rest of the spider species rarely bite, and usually only if threatened. Their bite is not deadly, unless you are allergic. So please do not squish them. After all, they are eating many insects that carry disease, destroy crops, damage ornamental plants, or infest homes. They help to control over-populations of flies, moths, wasps, bees, beetles, whiteflies, mosquitoes, and other small flying (and sometimes crawling) pests.

One source stated that yellow outdoor lights attract fewer insects and arachnids than do white lights. If you want fewer spiders near your outdoor lights at night, use yellow outdoor lights.

So, my advice: memorize what black widow and brown recluse spiders look like (pictures below) ... and leave the rest alone to do their jobs.

Black widow spider with red hour glass on the underside of the abdomen



Brown recluse rarely seen in southern Louisiana. More common in Alexandria and further north.



Along Came A Spider Who Sat Down Beside Her, continued

Spider web, also called spider silk, has long been used for its medicinal qualities. Spider silk is a protein-based material that does not have any allergens that cause immune or inflammatory reactions. For centuries it has been applied to wounds to promote clotting. It effectively does this because spider silk is high in Vitamin K, a substance needed to stop bleeding. It has antiseptic properties and has also been used to promote wound healing, especially difficult to heal wounds, such as diabetic ulcers.



Spider silk has traditionally been used for fishing lines and nets. More recently it has been used as cross-hairs for telescopes on guns and scientific equipment. It is not water soluble. It is tougher than Kevlar, more flexible than nylon, and thinner than a single strand of human hair. Some preliminary work has been done using spider silk for bullet-proof clothing, wear resistant lightweight clothing, ropes, nets, seat belts, parachutes, rust-free panels on motor vehicles or boats, biodegradable bottles, bandages, surgical thread, artificial tendons and ligaments, and supports for weak blood vessels. Unfortunately, its industrial use has been limited by its difficulty in being mass-produced. Below are several fascinating articles on the potential use of spider silk and the research to create it artificially.

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All photos by J. Blazek
except black widow and brown recluse spiders.

Jamie Blazek
Master Gardener
Vegucator
The Gardengoer, Editor

LSU Insect And Spider Identification Service



If you come across an unusual insect or spider and would like to know more about it, LSU has an identification service. You can send the specimen or a picture of it to the Louisiana State Arthropod Museum. There is a fee associated with the request. To learn more about the services and to download the form go to <https://www.lsuinsects.org/>

Jamie Blazek
Master Gardener
Vegucator
The Gardengoer, Editor

A Virtual Tour Of Christine Foster's Garden In Santa Fe

In the early summer edition of *The Gardengoer*, we toured the gardens of Christine and Mike Foster's retirement home within the historical district of Santa Fe, NM. That was a tour of the gardens in June. Here, we revisit those gardens in late August. The plants are fully grown. Some already spent for the season, but many more are in their full beauty. They received much needed monsoon rains (in Louisiana we just call them a good old downpour). Here, the natives are in bloom, some of the plants that "run" such as the Purple Poppy Mallow are literally running all over the gardens, the Rose of Sharon and Russian Sage are covered in bees and hummingbirds, and the ivy is about to bloom. While the 50-year-old apricot tree has dropped its fruit, the apple tree still has apples to eat. The garden transitions into autumn.

Stay tuned in for the fall/winter garden and the hope for a much needed snowpack to revitalize the aquafer.

Click on this link for Christine's video tour
<https://youtu.be/VLFNu2cWYgg>



For those interested in more information on Santa Fe, here are a few tidbits pulled from [11 Surprising Facts About Santa Fe, NM](#). Santa Fe is nicknamed "The City Different." Its story stretches back to the 1600s, giving this Southwestern hub multiple centuries to grow into its imaginative, artistic self. Santa Fe is the third oldest city in the United States and the oldest capital city, established in 1607 -- although most occupied lands were settled long before by Indigenous peoples. Santa Fe served as the capital of the Spanish "Kingdom of New Mexico," the Mexican province of Nuevo Mejjico, and as the principal city for the Spanish Empire north of the Rio Grande. But the city's native roots run even deeper. As in the 1600s and still today, a significant part of Santa Fe's culture is connected to the 23 Native American Tribes, Nations, and Pueblos who reside in New Mexico. Each tribe comprises its own sovereign nation, so the rules, language, and culture change depending on who you are visiting. Eight of the state's 19 Native American Pueblos are located north of Santa Fe. Plan to visit Santa Fe. It truly is a unique and different city.

Christine Foster
Master Gardener
FPJDC Project Chair

Mailbox Project

For a long time I have wanted to re-do the plants around my mailbox. After 30 years my mailbox was surrounded by a huge honeysuckle vine that was shabby and very much over-grown. The vines almost covered the entire mailbox! I had to be cautious of bugs and bees when checking the mail. I must admit, though, in the spring the scent was amazing!

Another issue, neighbors walking their dogs past my house would allow their pets to tinkle around my mailbox. So I really did not want to invest a lot of money in plants for the mailbox project. I have no problems with dogs, I just do not have any.

My husband surprised me one day. He cut the vine from the mailbox and pressured washed the wooden mailbox, it looked 100% different (sorry, no before picture). Since I needed extra hours for Master Gardeners this year, I decided to write the article and share my project with everyone.



I needed hardy plants around the mailbox which is not near the house. My garden hose does not reach that far so the plants will not get watered very often. I wanted to add a large potted plant, as well.



By the way, the master gardener gloves are the best! They came in handy for this project. I will need another pair soon.

Mailbox Project, continued

After cleaning and adding several bags of potting mix to the area, I planted mondo grass and other drought tolerant plants. I finished the project by adding a bit of mulch chips and a cute little cast iron figurine.

Do you notice an image on the tree to the right? It looks like a woman from the plantation days. Kinda spooky, right? Funny thing is, we have been visiting plantations along River Road for the past several months. My husband said, maybe a visitor came home with us!



All photos by Susan Leonard.

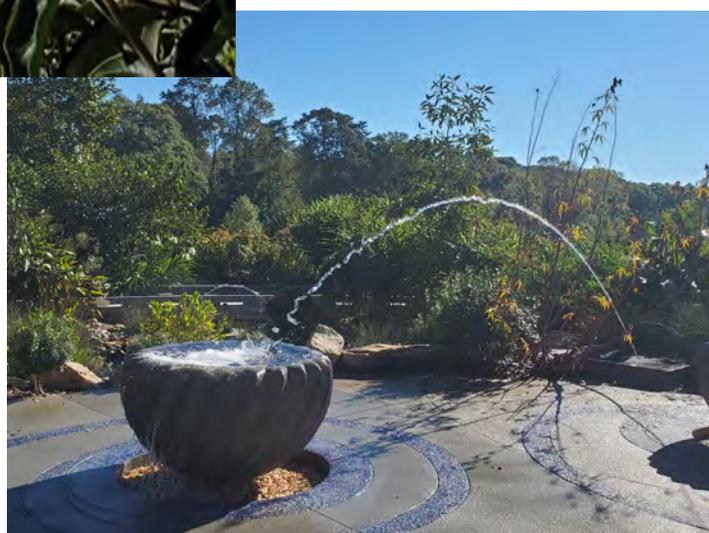
P.S.

Sadly, like most of my neighbors, my yard was a total mess after Hurricane Ida. So I will have to re-do my mailbox project. Stay tuned for updates!

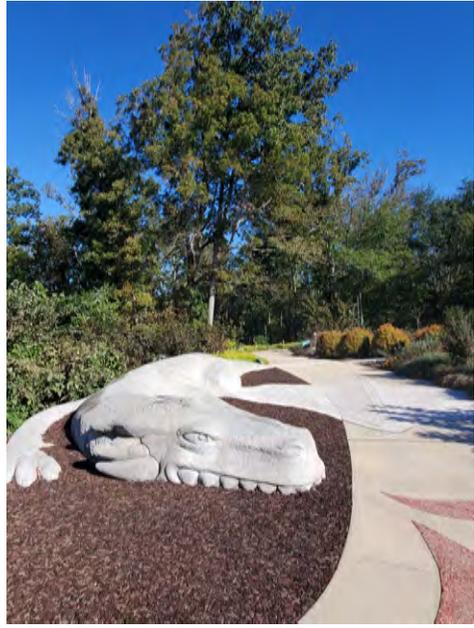
Susan Leonard
Master Gardener

A Virtual Tour: Atlanta Botanical Garden, Gainesville, Georgia

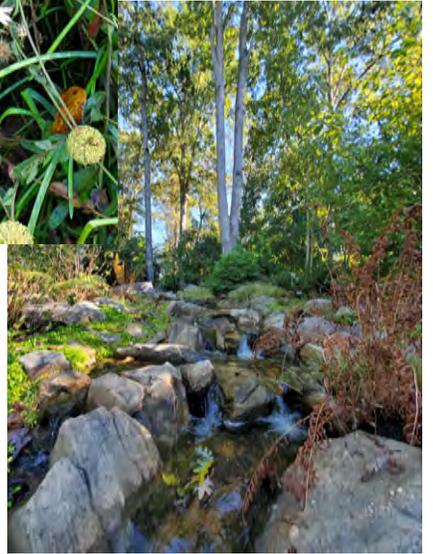
In late October, 2021, I had the pleasure of touring the Gainesville, Georgia extension of the Atlanta Botanical Garden. The leaves were just beginning their fall color change. Back home temperatures were still in the high 80's. The day we visited these gardens the sun was shining, the breeze was gently blowing, and the temperature was delightfully in the 60's. There are several hiking paths, each around a half of a mile, and each with its own attractions and plants. Some paths are through wooded areas, while others are paved and handicap accessible. There was a lot of gardening inspiration, both in the plantings and in the whimsical art.



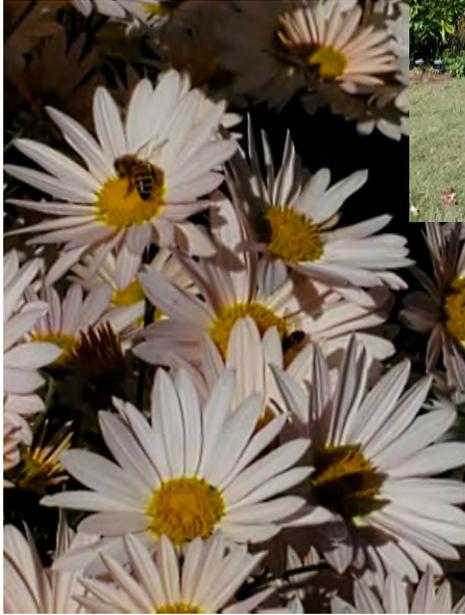
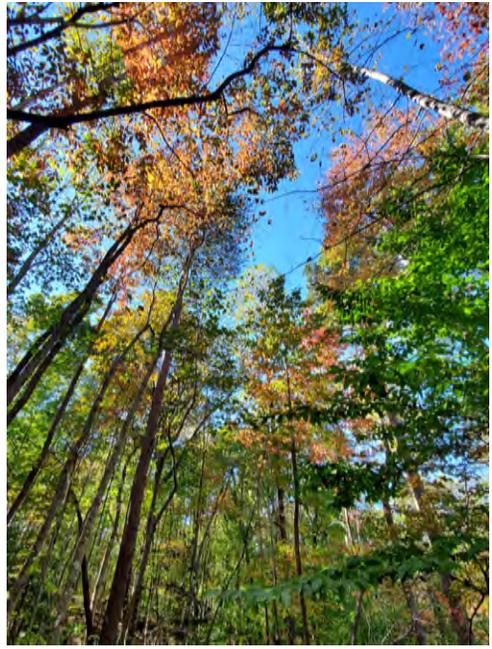
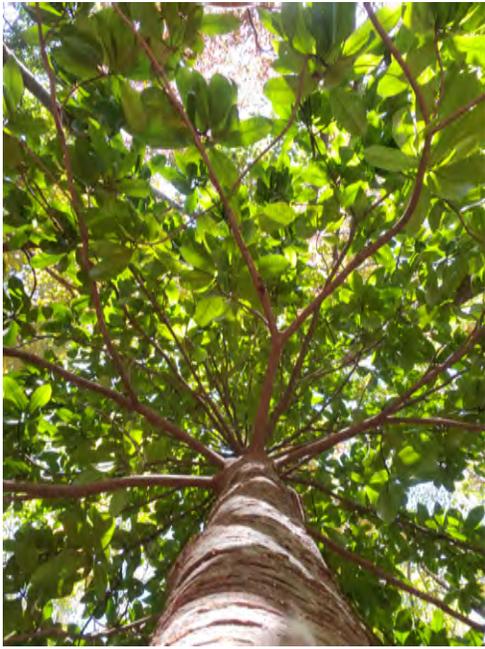
A Virtual Tour:
Atlanta Botanical Garden, Gainesville, Georgia, continued



A Virtual Tour:
Atlanta Botanical Garden, Gainesville, Georgia, continued



A Virtual Tour:
Atlanta Botanical Garden, Gainesville, Georgia, continued



Jamie Blazek
Master Gardener
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My Fall Flower Garden

I always have assorted vegetables growing in my garden. I also enjoy a pop of color mixed in with the vegetable beds. I particularly like to attract as many pollinators as possible. Everyone enjoys butterflies and hummingbirds, but there are also many varieties of bees, wasps and moths of all sizes that frequent my gardens.

One plant that is a wonderful attractor of pollinators is Mountain Mint. This is a mounding plant that will spread easily. It grows about 18 inches tall. The flowers are tiny and hard to see, but the upper leaves are a beautiful silvery white color. I have sat and watched over a dozen different pollinators busily exploring these plants ... wasps and bees of all sizes, even some tiny moths. The flowers are too small for most butterflies, though. It is at its best midsummer and by fall is no longer blooming. It will die down and return reliably in the spring.



One of the most striking plants in my fall garden is Firespike, *Odontonema strictum*. This plant is not only incredibly showy, but attracts tons of butterflies with its vibrant color.



Salvias are another favorite. I like to blend several varieties ... red, blue, and deep purple.



My Fall Flower Garden, continued



Not necessarily a pollinator plant, but one I enjoy seeing bloom in the fall, is Little Volcano (*Lespedeza thumbergii*), a bushy shrub with cascading branches of pea-like flowers. (left)

A welcome addition this year in one of my wilder beds is this volunteer of wild ageratum (blue boneset). The lovely blue color does not photograph well, but is a pleasure to see in the garden. (right)



Early this spring I planted a bed of orange *Cosmos sulphureus*. The bed succeeded beyond my expectations by blooming continuously for months.

I finally pulled the plants, intending to put something else in that bed. However, the plants had re-seeded themselves so well that I soon had a second batch of Cosmos!

And finally, a plant that I really enjoy seeing in the garden, a white shrimp plant, *Justicia betonica*. We have all seen the red shrimp plant, *Justicia brandegeana*, I had only recently discovered the white one. It is almost regal in the garden when in full bloom. I have included a photo of the red shrimp plant for comparison.

It gives me great pleasure to see all these colorful flowers this fall. I hope you have enjoyed them as well.

All photos by L. Boucher.



Leslie Boucher
Master Gardener

Honey Bee On A Roselle Blossom, *Hibiscus sabdariffa*



Photo by J Blazek

Jamie Blazek
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THE GARDENGOER
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